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3 April 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: SNIE on Terrorism

Here is the gist of my comments on the Terrorism SNIE which I think are suitable for circulation throughout the staff and to your colleagues as you see fit. I am disinclined to circulate my handwritten notes which reflect a rise in my blood pressure, and believe that the attached list which was prepared subsequently presents the more balanced picture of my views.

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[redacted]

for William J. Casey

Attachment

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Orig - Addressee
1 - O/DCI Chrono
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1. My decision on this draft and my comments to you are based on my impressions as a reader. Both Admiral Inman and I have thoroughly read the draft and, while you as specialists can no doubt counter each criticism with specific examples, readers like myself are the principal consumers of this paper. Therefore overall impressions are important.

2. The problems I perceive fall into four categories:

-- Evidence: Repeatedly in the draft, where evidence is lacking the draft draws negative conclusions either directly or by inference. As an example, in paragraph 97 the statement is made "there is no evidence of direct Soviet assistance to groups that are primarily terrorist. This is consonant with their frequently stated position that terrorist actions tend to be destructive and counter-productive."

- This careless use of evidence seems to be at the heart of DIA's footnotes to which I am sympathetic.

- The draft seems to require a standard of evidence more appropriate to a court of law than intelligence analysis.

-- Proving Negatives: The draft seems to strain at proving the Soviets are not doing something. For example in paragraph 21 the draft states "the Soviets do not direct or encourage these (Middle East) groups in the use of terror...." Can you prove this negative on either direction or encouragement? Much of the evidence elsewhere in this paper suggests the contrary, especially with respect to encouragement. Another example is the statement that there is "nothing to suggest that the Soviets have encouraged Qadhafi." What about the supply of arms and so forth.

-- Missing the Point: As stated in the first paragraph of the terms of reference, State asked for an estimate of Soviet support for international terrorism and the role such support plays in Soviet foreign policy. This is quite straightforward.

- But the estimate gets tangled in semantics and over-reliance on Soviet statements trying to define what is terrorism and to disprove direct Soviet control.

- The main point of the SNIE is the extent of Soviet support (great according to the draft) and how it relates to Soviet political and strategic purposes.

-- Lawyer's Brief: The draft tries to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the Soviets are not in direct control of international terrorism. It uses fine distinctions and euphemisms, generally exculpatory, to find the client innocent. For example "condoning and exploiting terrorism may encourage its practice"; "urban sabatoge."

-- Focus: The last two questions in the five put by State are not adequately addressed and they are the ones which have practical implications for policymakers, particularly in the overlaying, mutually supporting and common objective implications and influences of terrorism and insurgency instigation and support.

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